

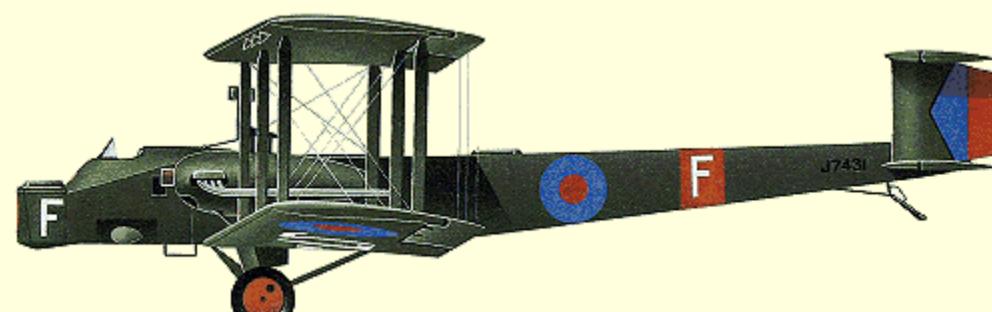


Designed to meet the requirements of Air Ministry Specification 1/21, the Vickers Virginia proved to be the backbone of the RAF's heavy night bomber force in the inter-war years. In fulfilling such a role from 1924 to 1937, this rugged and reliable aircraft made a considerable contribution to the development of the ideas and the experience of men who were the founder members of Bomber Command in World War II.

Two aircraft were ordered initially, designated Virginia I and Virginia II. The former was the first to fly (on 24 November 1922), powered by two 335kW Napier Lion engines. It was basically an enlarged version of the Vickers Vimy, but had its Napier Lion engines mounted on the lower wings and enclosed in rectangular nacelles. Construction was mainly of wood and fabric with a fairly extensive amount of wire bracing. The second Virginia differed by having close-fitting engine cowlings; a Lamblin cooling radiator mounted between the landing-gear legs; a lengthened nose to provide more room for the bomb-aimer and, for the same reason, a slight decrease in intended bomb load; and a variable-incidence tailplane which could be adjusted in flight. Initially both the Virginias were unstable in flight, leading to modifications which included dihedral on both wings instead of on the lower wing only, introduction of larger rudders, an additional fin, and resiting of the engines further forward.

The first production contract was for two Virginia Mk.III aircraft, generally similar to the Virginia II but provided with dual controls and changes in armament. Like the earlier prototypes, these were subsequently modified to later standards. Four additional aircraft were ordered in 1923. Power plant comprised two 349kW Napier Lion Series II engines. Again, these aircraft were later updated, being fitted with metal wings, and ended their lives as Mk.Xs. The two Virginia Mk.IVs which followed differed in electrical equipment and bomb load. First major production version (22 built) was the Mk.V, which had a third rudder, first test-flown on a Mk.IV aircraft; otherwise these aircraft were generally similar to the Mk.III. They were modified subsequently to later marks. Interestingly, Vimys were still being delivered at this time.

The Virginia Mk.VI (25 built) was the first production version to include dihedral on both upper and lower wings as standard; design of the wing-folding mechanism was improved. It was followed by 11 Mk.VIIs, which introduced still further changes to improve stability - including introduction of Frise ailerons and sweepback on both wings. These represented such an improvement in flight characteristics that many earlier aircraft were modified subsequently to this Mk.VII standard.



To provide adequate defence for these large and comparatively slow bombers there had been a number of experiments to locate gunners in 'fighting tops' - nacelles attached to the trailing edge of the upper wing. Apart from the aerodynamic problems, the gunners suffered from the cold and it was decided to introduce instead a gunner's position at the tail-end of the fuselage. This involved not only modification of the rear fuselage but increased tailplane span and a lengthened nose to maintain good stability. These aircraft (eight built) became designated Mk.IX and some earlier aircraft were converted subsequently to this standard. Final version was the Mk.X, which introduced a metal structure with fabric covering (50 built). A large number of earlier aircraft were converted to include the more powerful engines, hydraulic wheel brakes, landing lights, and auto pilot which distinguished this, the last of the series.

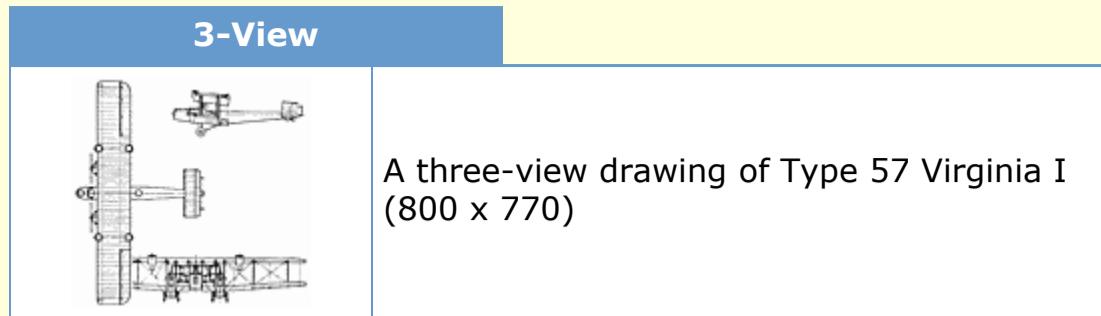


COMPANY PROFILE

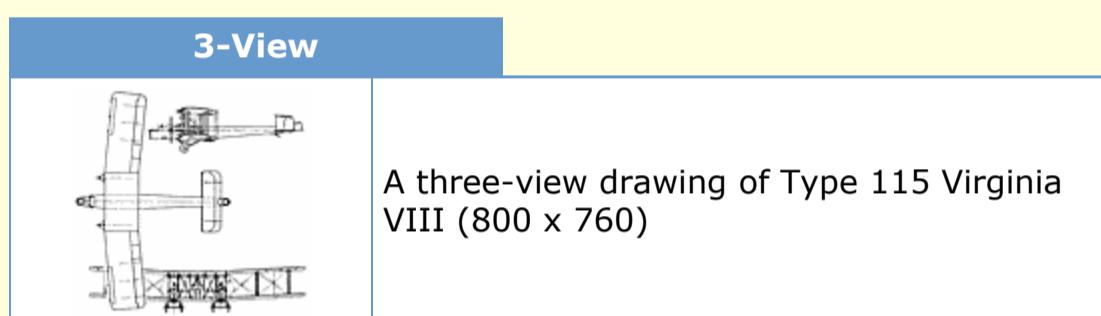


[All the World's Rotorcraft](#)

First entering service in 1924, Virginias remained in first-line deployment until 1937 and for four more years several remained in use, especially for parachute training



Specification		
MODEL	Mk.X	
WEIGHTS		
Take-off weight	7983 kg	17600 lb
Empty weight	4377 kg	9650 lb
DIMENSIONS		
Wingspan	26.72 m	88 ft 8 in
Length	18.97 m	62 ft 3 in
Height	5.54 m	18 ft 2 in
Wing area	202.34 m ²	2177.97 sq ft
PERFORMANCE		
Max. speed	174 km/h	108 mph
Ceiling	4725 m	15500 ft
Range	1585 km	985 miles
ARMAMENT	3 x 7.7mm machine-guns, 1360kg of bombs	



Comments
David Leeder , e-mail , 18.02.2014 13:10 Aeroplane Monthly September 2013 has a brilliant exposé on the aircraft-including some air to air refuelling with a Waipiti. reply
Ian MacLean , e-mail , 20.07.2013 20:44 I have a photo of a Virginia half out of a hangar on some ceremonial occasion: Union Flag draped over the nose, RAF officer and brass band in attendance, along with a priest and a possible Civil Servant! Straight wing, no dihedral, so presumably MkV or earlier. Inline engines, 2-blade props. Part of the number visible: 756?2. May I send you the photo for identification /elucidation? reply
zhuma , 21.06.2011 06:36 My father was later promoted to Hawker Audax's and Hart's..much more 'fun' according to him? reply
Barry Smith , e-mail , 09.06.2010 00:12 I have a photo of a Virginia taken at RAF Henlow around 1934. Dad , as an AC2 rigger used to fly in the tail when they were on parachute drops from the platforms fitted near the outboard mainplane struts. From here , I believe, the intrepid jumpers would pull their ripcords & be pulled from the aircraft.Even that must have taken just a little courage. reply
George Lawrence , e-mail , 31.12.2009 06:06 I have several photos of my father at RAF Worthy Down in 1932 alongside several aircraft which I believe are these. But the photos show a pair of wheels under the nose, although the aircraft is a tail dragger. could anyone confirm that this aircraft was the Virginia ? Also one photo gives the serial number as J 8914 is this also a Virginia? reply
Mike Galvin , e-mail , 05.08.2009 13:22

My late Father was a rear gunner /observer in Virginia's in the mid 1930's based at RAF Worthy Down. He told me that when he wanted to attract the pilots attention..for there was no intercom of course..he leaned out of his open rear gunner position, grabbed a rudder and 'wagged' it. The pilot would feel this movement on his 'joy-stick' and would look round to check on the observer's reason for this. One reason would perhaps be for spotting a railway station which might then be 'buzzed' so that the station name could be read at low level to confirm their navigational position? My father was later promoted to Hawker Audax's and Hart's..much more 'fun' according to him?

[reply](#)

Joanna White, [e-mail](#), 01.06.2008 04:38

My father, Derek White, believes the length shown in the table is incorrect and should be 16m or 52'3". Can anybody else concur or prove otherwise?

[reply](#)

Jason Moore, [e-mail](#), 24.05.2008 06:17

It was a slow, clunky old biplane, but still one of my all-time favourites. Whatever else you can say about between-the-wars British aeroplanes, they had character.

[reply](#)

Keith Thompson, [e-mail](#), 02.10.2007 00:20

I have two photos of Virginias. One has a four bladed prop. They were taken by the deceased father of a friend, circa 1929. Can I send them to you for your comments. ie What marks are they etc and anything else you may know about them?

[reply](#)

R Garrett, [e-mail](#), 15.08.2007 19:51

My father in law flew in one of these and we think he was a navigator but we are not sure. I have a photograph of him with this plane

[reply](#)

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TOP 100](#)

